

## OTHER BOARDS, DIFFERENT VOICES

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*The Board of Podiatric Medicine (BPM) is the unit of the Medical Board of California (MBC), Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA), which administers licensing of DPMs under the State Medical Practice Act.*

**Sacramento, April 29**--BPM is a part of MBC; in some ways much apart indeed. Being completely self-funding, governed and managed, BPM's organizational culture and politics differ considerably. Medical Board perspectives are still interesting . . .

### Problematic Applicants

This excerpt is from the Medical Board Licensing Chief's April 15 report to the Medical Board Members comprising their Division of Licensing. There are no similar trends in our DPM licensing:

"The Licensing Section continues to encounter an increased number of applications that require senior staff review. The growing trend reveals the issues presented by applicants have become far more complicated in nature; a higher number of applicants have experienced significant mental disorders or episodes during their residency or practice in other states; and problematic applicants are increasingly resistant to restricted or probationary licenses. In addition, staff has observed a high number of problem applicants are obtaining legal counsel to assist them through the application process. These trends have absorbed an enormous amount of analytical staff time, and in many cases, incorporated the need for legal consultation to conduct the application review process."

### Painful Encounters

The following is from an editorial by a Past President of the Medical Board of California printed in the Federation of State Medical Boards' *Journal of Medical Licensure and Discipline*, Vol 91 No 1, 2005.

"It may surprise most medical board appointees that there may come a time when they perceive conflict between performing the very duties they were appointed to perform and political pressures to adopt certain decisions that may not be in the best interest of the public they swore to protect. . . .

"I could never think of a more noble calling than the medical profession, as our patients and their families entrust us with their most valuable possessions: their lives and the lives of their loved ones. I could never imagine serving in any other role but that of a physician. My role on the board brought me face to face with some of the darkest aspects of my chosen profession. It was painful to encounter some of the horror we discovered as we listened to patient complaints, and as we read, occasionally with tears in our eyes, the embarrassing details of misconduct committed by "so called" colleagues. . . .

"The nature of the task and its visibility invited attention from the media and a variety of consumer and other member advocate groups. This added further stress to an already

stressful mission, and occasionally brought attempts by various political entities to influence some of our decisions. I was startled to discover the impact of politics on

decisions that should be exclusively determined by the need for public protection, and at times there seemed to be an inclination by some members to yield to political pressure coming from high above. It was painful to watch as some tried to manipulate fellow board members to make decisions that satisfied political concerns, and occasionally followed personal agendas, at the expense of what was best for the board and the public. But as carefully crafted and orchestrated as some of those schemes were, I was proud to see the board make the right decisions in the end, and not give in to coercion and manipulation.

“As political appointees, board members who accept appointments and take their oath of office, should never allow themselves to be torn by a conflict between political influence and responsibility to the public. The choice should be easy. Public protections must always be placed ahead of self promotion or appeasement of outside political pressures.”

### **Using the System**

BPM handles many calls from facilities and DPMs seeking guidance on credentialing, privileging and scope. As reflected in CPMA’s latest [California Podiatric Physician](#), there is concern about the Department of Health Service’s (DHS) treatment of DPMs. Gordon J. Shumate, DPM thoughtfully copied us on correspondence to his State Senator and Assemblyperson last month. Legislators value hearing from constituents and can be immensely helpful. Anyone wishing to follow Dr. Shumate’s wise example can find addresses of state representatives with **Find My District** at: [www.legislature.ca.gov/](http://www.legislature.ca.gov/)

### **[bpm.ca.gov](http://bpm.ca.gov)**

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